

Report

on the first *epigraphy.info* workshop in Heidelberg, March 21-23, 2018

In view of the increasingly often expressed interest within the epigraphic community for a digitally based research platform, with a well conceived strategy for sustainability, there was a pressing need for concrete and structured working discussions. After the call for [preregistration](#) at the 15th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy in Vienna in September 2017 the first *epigraphy.info* workshop, which on this occasion was organised by the *EDH*, took place in Heidelberg.

◆ Participants

The [participants](#) were a group of effectively 48 recognized scholars; 19 further scholars who were not able to come indicated their support and made clear their desire to be involved in further plans. The international group of participants from two continents and 13 countries represents to a very large extent a 'who is who' of Digital Humanists with a specific interest in Ancient Epigraphy.

◆ Expectations & concept

As the first workshop of its kind, it started with a two-stepped approach, to decide above all whether *epigraphy.info* should be considered as a suitable format for the future of digital epigraphy; then, in the case of a positive answer to the first proposition, to set the decisive course for its realization.

It had to be completed within the comparatively short time frame of two half days and one complete day and in this period a broad spectrum of aspects from the basic establishment of desiderata to the development of a first sustainable concept had to be achieved. The [work programme](#) took this challenge into account.

After an **introduction** the *first day* was dedicated to thematically wide-ranging **short presentations** which were aimed at initiating the following **discussions**; many of these were carried on at the **social dinner**. – On the *second day* there were six **working groups**, which had been constituted from the participants in order to discuss in detail the themes that had been agreed upon from the plenum of the first day. – On the *third day* the **results and answers** were gathered together, a **venue and date** for the second workshop was agreed upon and a **programme of work** to be achieved before the next workshop was drawn up.

As a common communication platform, *googledocs* were available throughout the entire workshop, in which the results of the working groups and discussions were recorded and documented for everyone to see.

◆ **Results & answers**

I. Venue & date for the next *epigraphy.info* workshop:

University of Zadar (HR), September 2018, 19th-21st (according to doodle voting of April 2018).

II. Concept for *epigraphy.info*:

Two committees were constituted at the workshop: a steering committee and a technical committee.

Steering committee chairs (until the next meeting):

- Francisca Feraudi (Heidelberg)
- Julia Lougovaya-Ast (Heidelberg)
- Anamarija Kurilić (Zadar)

Technical committee chairs (until the next meeting):

- Pietro Liuzzo (Hamburg)
- Frank Grieshaber (Heidelberg)
- Tom Elliott (New York)

1) People / Institutions

The people / institutions that will build and keep *epigraphy.info* are as follows:

- The **participants** and their institutions.

- Specifically named institutions are:

AIEGL (Paris: Silvia Orlandi, Denis Rousset),

Brill (Amsterdam: Mirjam Elbers, Ernest Suyvers),

CNRS / ANHIMA (Paris: Nicolas Tran, Violaine Sebillotte),

Hamburg University (Pietro Liuzzo),

ICS (London: Gabriel Bodard),

IDEA Association (Pisa: Silvia Orlandi),

ISAW (New York: Tom Elliot),

Lupa (Wien: Ortolf Harl),

Patrimonium (Bordeaux: Alberto dalla Rosa, Vincent Razanajao)

PETRAE (Bordeaux: Navarro Caballero, Nathalie Prévôt)

- Various institutions will be approached to seek involvement of representatives of such areas as Libya (→ Macerata: Antolini / Marengo / Paci), Turkey, Black Sea Region, Syria, Iraq.

2) Structure

epigraphy.info will be a collaborative platform for ancient inscriptions – initially with the focus on Latin and Greek inscriptions – that builds upon some basic ideas and experiences of the *EAGLE* project but will go well beyond the scope of *EAGLE* because the way in which *EAGLE* manages integration is not sustainable, being both technologically brittle and time-, effort- and cost-intensive. It will incorporate existing databases both large and small, active and inactive and will allow for adding new projects or collections of inscriptions.

The basic features of this platform are editing of all sections of the platform (metadata and transcriptions) within a precisely defined workflow, controlled by an editorial board, and offering searching and browsing facilities for transcriptions and metadata. All submissions into the *epigraphy.info* platform will make clear their precise origin, like e. g. *EDR*, *EDH* and any individual contributors etc. The platform will version all changes made to the data, DOIs will be assigned to changes to create user specific micro-publications.

An integral part of the platform will be an editorial board: This will be constituted of delegates from major databases and outside specialists as senior advisers. The mass of inscription data could be grouped e. g. by date, region, type among members of the board. The board oversees all steps in the peer reviewed publication process of inscription data, defines policies and best practices (including ethical decisions / policies / protections / intellectual property rights) and is involved in PR and community building.

Challenges

While during the *EAGLE* project already a lot of work has been done on harmonizing metadata and standards of transcription, quite a number of challenges are still open and need to be addressed in the future:

The standards for the EpiDoc XML used must be checked and robust ways ensured that the EpiDoc is consistent throughout the platform.

References in the external databases to individual published editions and other bibliography are idiosyncratic and largely recorded as human-formatted strings of text. A central, controlled bibliographic database needs to be built, based on existing bibliographies already in use at various projects, where each bibliographic entry is citable. Some basic preliminary work for inscription corpora has already been conducted by *Trismegistos*.

Existing components of an epigraphic ontology (controlled vocabularies, semantic relationships, data model) are insufficient to express and manage characteristics of and relationships between inscriptions and other entities of interest (e. g. places, people, objects).

Prototyping and next steps

For demonstration purposes it was agreed to prototype an editor and a cross-database textual and keyword search mechanism with a more sustainable and open data interchange model than *EAGLE*, using existing interfaces/APIs (like IIIF for images and DTS for inscription texts) and Linked Open Data (RDF) for the data transport mechanism. Doing so with *EAGLE* data plus one other external database like e. g. the *Epigraphische Datenbank zum antiken Kleinasien*, would also qualify the degree to which the existing EpiDoc-XML is useful for (or an impediment to) particular search features. This prototype web application will be demonstrated during the [second epigraphy.info](#)

workshop in Zadar.

This envisioned prototype will offer only a very basic, streamlined functionality; more work needs to be invested after the Zadar meeting into completing work on the epigraphic ontology for missing entities and relations, into including smaller projects, and into incorporating into the online platform a defined workflow for entering and editing inscriptions which includes members of the editorial board and their decision making. Another issue would be to incorporate Greek texts, which has its own challenges in terms of searching and editing of transcriptions. Another step would be deeper annotations, like morphological and linguistic annotations. Prosopographic data needs to be dealt with in a more systematic way than is done in current projects, for this a central prosopographic datastore and web service is essential; some preliminary work has been done in the *SNAP* project. An automatic way of notifications of changes in the platform could point users to new editions of inscriptions.

3) Finance

Financial support for the building and maintenance of *epigraphy.info* itself could not be solved at present.

- COST (http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions) as an EU-funded programme is to be taken in consideration as a networking instrument for cooperation and coordination (traveling, workshops, trainings, etc.) for nationally funded research activities; the very tight deadline for the next call in April 20th 2018 made it impossible, but a future call should undoubtedly be kept in mind (L. Calvelli).
- If institutions paid yearly fees to *IDEA Association* some of the funds raised to go towards supporting a member of the editorial board as well as creating a co-funding starting point.
- Attention was drawn to “Next European Framework Programme (FP9: 2021-2027): Mission-oriented research and innovation and Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities for a European Research Agenda – Valuation of SSH in mission-oriented research”, Vienna, 28-29 November 2018 (<https://era.gv.at/directory/262>)
- A number of smaller tasks that will contribute to aspects of the platform were identified as projects for which applications might be made (harmonization of data building upon existing work

but bringing it to a satisfactory level for implementation in the platform).

III. Tasks until & for the second *epigraphy.info* workshop (Zadar, September 2018):

To be worked on **until the next workshop**:

- elaborate a technical environment (demo/alpha version)
- preliminary discussions concerning the integration of Greek inscriptions
- exploring possibilities for financing and institutional anchoring

To be worked out **during the next workshop**:

- evaluation of the demo/alpha version
- integration of Greek inscriptions
- definition of the duties of the editorial board
- workflow of submission and finalization
- formalising descriptive vocabularies
- technical solution for bibliographical questions and unique identifier for inscriptions
- various: e. g. strategic and legal questions in dealing in *epigraphy.info* with unpublished inscriptions, ensuring that the publication privileges are respected (also including those on the black market and other ethical issues); *instrumentum domesticum* / portable supports.

Heidelberg, April 20th 2018

James COWEY / Francisca FERAUDI-GRUÉNAIS / Frank GRIESHABER / Julia LOUGOVAYA-AST

Appendix

Participants (with email addresses):

J. Cowey (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, **EDH**); F. Feraudi-Gruénais (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, EDH); B. Gräf (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, EDH); F. Grieshaber (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, EDH); J. Osnabrügge (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, EDH); C. Witschel (DE, University of Heidelberg, EDH); T. Hölscher (DE, University of Heidelberg, EDH); S. Evangelisti (IT, University of Foggia, **EDR**); S. Orlandi (IT, University La Sapienza Rome, **AIEGL**); C. Cenati (AT, University of Vienna); T. Corsten (AT, University of Vienna, SEG); V. Hofmann (AT, University of Vienna); M. De Pauw (BE, KU Leuven, **Trismegistos**); C. Bruun (CDN, University of Toronto); R. Ast (DE, University of Heidelberg); U. Ehmig (DE, University of Heidelberg); O. Gengler (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Malalas); E. Giele (DE, University of Heidelberg); R. Haensch (DE, Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy Munich); A. Hartmann (DE, University of Augsburg); M. Horster (DE, University of Mainz); A. Jördens (DE, University of Heidelberg); M. Khayutina (DE, University of Munich); P. Liuzzo (DE, University of Hamburg); J. Lougovaya-Ast (DE, University of Heidelberg); L. Maylein (DE, Heidelberg University Library); A. Rampichini (DE, University of Heidelberg); D. Svoboda-Baas (DE, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Digital Humanities); F. Weise (DE, University of Hamburg); A. Campos (FR, CNRS/ANHIMA Paris); A. Alonso Déniz (FR, HiSoMA Research Center Lyon, e-SEC); D. Rousset (FR, EPHE Paris); N. Tran (FR, University of Poitiers); G. Bodard (GB, University of London); S. Vanderbilt (GB, University of Nottingham); D. Demicheli (HR, University of Zagreb); A. Kurilić (HR, University of Zadar); L. Calvelli (IT, University Ca' Foscari of Venice); A. Felicetti (IT, University of Florence); C. Lasagni (IT, University of Turin); F. Murano (IT, University of Florence); M. Elbers (NL, SEG/Brill); E. Suyver (NL, SEG-Brill); R. Ardevan (RO, University of Cluj); A. Ragolić (SLO, University of Ljubljana); O. Pelcer Vujačić (SRB, University of Belgrade); T. Elliott (USA, New York University).

Not personally present at the workshop but interested to be involved:

F. Beutler (AT, University of Vienna); W. Spickermann (AT, University of Graz); K. Harter-Uibopuu (DE, University of Hamburg); K. Matijević (DE, University of Flensburg); G. Staab (DE, University of Cologne); J. Gómez Pantoja (ES, University of Alcalá de Henares, **HepOnl**); E. Santin (FR, HiSoMA Research Center Lyon); S. Lambert (GB, Cardiff University); A. Mullen (GB, University of Nottingham); C. Kokkinia (GR, National Hellenic Research Foundation, KERA); A. Makres (GR, Greek Epigraphic Society, HERC); A. Bencivenni (IT, University of Bologna); A. Felle (IT, University of Bari, **EDB**); G. Sarullo (IT, University of Enna); S. Babamova (MAK, Archaeological Museum of Macedonia Skopje); R. Varga (RO, University of Cluj-Napoca); R. Benefiel (USA, Washington and Lee University); J. Bodel (USA, Brown University); J. Sosin (USA, Duke University).

Interested people subsequently added:

O. Harl (AT, Vienna, Lupa); F. Mitthof (AT, University of Vienna); N. Sharankov (BG, University of Sofia); A. dalla Rosa (FR, University of Bordeaux, Patrimonium); N. Laubry (FR, École française de Rome); M. Navarro Caballero (FR, University of Bordeaux, CNRS, **PETRAE**); N. Prévôt (FR, University of Bordeaux, PETRAE); V. Razanajao (FR, University of Bordeaux, Patrimonium); V. Sebillotte (FR, CNRS/ANHIMA); S. Antolini (IT, University of Macerata); S. M. Marengo (IT, University of Macerata); G. Paci (IT, University of Macerata).